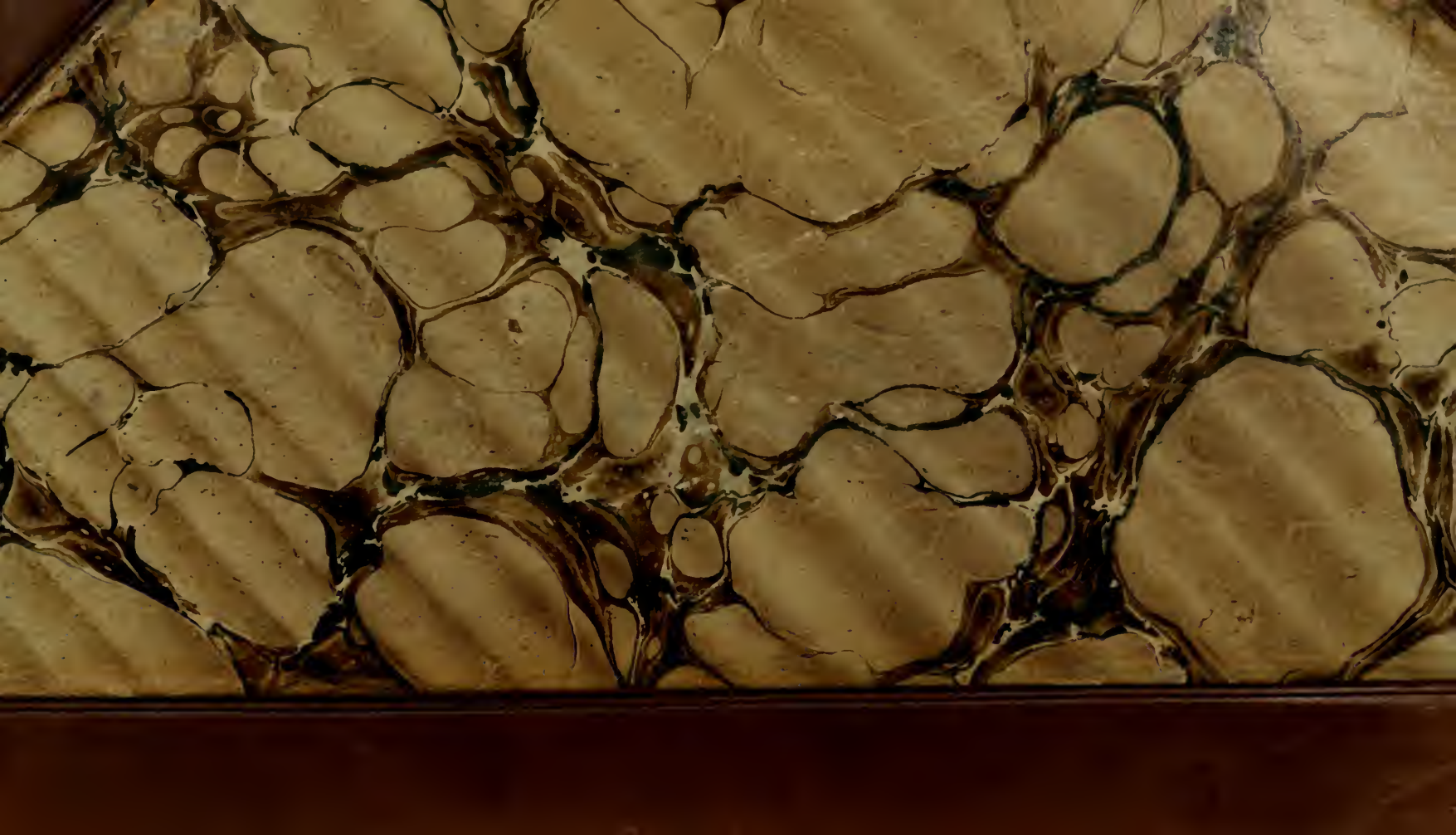

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TWO SERMONS

ON THE

DUTY AND JOY

OF

FREQUENT PUBLIC WORSHIP.

BY

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Second Edition.

LONDON:

W. SKEFFINGTON AND SON, 163, PICCADILLY, W.

1879.

[*Price Fourpence.*]

By the same Author.

SOME REASONS WHY I VALUE DAILY SERVICE. A Devotional Tract. *Price 2d.*

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

The following Sermons, originally published by me, in the year 1862, have long been out of print. Since that time the practice of opening our Churches daily for prayer has become so common that it may seem needless to urge arguments in its favour. But as I have often, of late, been asked for copies by clergymen and others, who have thought they would be useful in their parishes, I now re-publish them in the hope that, by the blessing of God, they may still do some service in removing prejudices against ~~Divine~~ Service, and in recommending that ancient and very valuable form of Christian devotion to all Members of our Church.

W. H. L.

Hagley Rectory, June, 1879.

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PREFACE.

The following Sermons are published in the hope that they may be of use in recommending the habit of attending the Daily Services of the Church.

There are, of course, very many men, especially Englishmen, whom one could never hope to move from their old habits, or old opinions, on any such matter. There is an obstinacy in the English character which makes it exceedingly difficult to introduce any new custom, or new ways of thinking and feeling, among them. This obstinacy and immovableness is not, I think, by any means altogether a fault. It is connected with some of the most valuable of our national characteristics—such, for instance, as steady loyalty to established institutions, and a great slowness in adopting changes. And I respect the obstinacy of many, more than the light and hasty changeableness of others. Still, obstinacy in the face of any plain precept of Holy Scripture cannot be justified. Archbishop Whately has said that readers of the Bible "may be divided into two classes—those who wish to be on the side of the Bible, and those who wish to have the Bible on their side." Many men come to the study of the Bible with opinions already immovably made up; they have not

the habit of giving way to Scripture, or yielding to the wisdom contained in it because it is Divine. But others, like the Bereans of old, are of "more noble," more generous and teachable disposition, and are ready, whenever they hear any duty urged upon them, which they have not yet practised, "*to search the Scriptures whether these things are so*,"* and act accordingly. And I earnestly hope and believe that there will be found to be many true-hearted Christians, and many loyal members of our Church—such as feel a great deference for the singular wisdom of our Reformers in interpreting the Word of God—who, if they can once be led to consider the subject of Daily Service in the light of Holy Scripture, and in so doing, perceive the strength of the argument for this godly practice, would be willing to give up their prejudices against it, and learn the value of it, as, by God's mercy, I have, myself, long since done.

Most undoubtedly, much the larger number of lay members of the Church could not find time to attend every day, nor can I think that it was ever intended they should do so. But if they learn to feel the pleasure and the joy of frequent common worship, and even, as the early Christians seem to have done, the coldness of any day of their pilgrimage here on earth in which they do not come into the blessed presence of God with their brethren, they will attend when they can.

The object, however, of the Clergy in celebrating the "daily sacrifice of prayer and praise," should certainly,

* Acts xvii. 11.

I think, not be to urge it as a duty upon all to attend, so as to make it a burden upon the conscience of any. Men should be left free to use it as they find they are able, with profit and comfort to themselves, to do so. But it should be considered as a privilege for the Clergy to "wait upon God in His courts" every day; and it is right to give all lay-members of the Church the opportunity of attending, on any day when they are able and disposed so to do.

Trusting that what I have said may, by the blessing of God, be made useful to some, I commend the subject to all reverent students of the Word of God, and loyal members of our Church.

W. H. L.

Hagley Rectory, April 21, 1862.

SERMON I.

ON THE DUTY OF FREQUENT PUBLIC WORSHIP.

LUKE XXIV. 52, 53.—*And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.*

HEB. X. 25.—*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

IN the work of self-examination it is not only necessary for us to compare our lives with what we at present think is right, and in accordance with the Will of God, but also to consider whether our views of duty are true and Scriptural. A man may think himself right, when he is wrong; he may "*think that he is doing God service*," * when, in fact, he is fighting against God; or, may think himself entirely guiltless, when, in the sight of God, he is gravely in fault. When the light of God breaks in, even the holiest and wisest of un-inspired men sees that, in many things, God's law is more strict and holy than he had imagined by nature.

* John xvi. 2.

It is very important that we should all learn to distrust our own natural judgment of right and wrong, and that of the world, and to come before God to be judged. "*If our heart condemn us*," says S. John, "*God is greater than our heart*," * His Law more strict. And our Lord Himself, speaking to the Pharisees, says: "*Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God.*"† Practices and tempers, which the world may altogether justify and call harmless, may be so far from harmless, that they may even be actual abomination in the sight of God. The judgment of the world on right and wrong is always changing, and is very untrustworthy. Accordingly S. Paul says distinctly, in one place, "*I know nothing by myself*,"—or, as the original words properly mean, "I am not conscious of any sin in myself,"—"*yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord.*"‡ Every one who has lived an earnest, Christian life, knows how he has grown in the knowledge of God and goodness. Is it not true that, when you become acquainted with holy and good men, they teach you to see things in a higher and purer light, to feel many things to be wrong, of which once you thought little?

I know that many do not feel anything of this kind. There are many who will never submit themselves as learners to others; who have too much of the spirit of those who said, "*We are they that ought to speak; who is Lord over us?*" § who seldom even put themselves deliberately "at the feet of Jesus," and ask Him to teach them,—to "*open their eyes that they may see the wondrous things of His Law*;"‖ or come to Him privately, as the disciples did, to ask Him to "declare unto them" the real meaning of His words.

But I trust there are many of us, who do come into the House of God as learners, wishing to be led to

* 1 John iii. 20. † Luke xvi. 15. ‡ 1 Cor. iv. 4.
§ Ps. xii. 4. ‖ Ps. cxix. 18.

change their opinions and ways of thinking, the moment they see that the Word of God teaches something different from what they have hitherto thought.

The subject to which I wish now to apply these remarks is, that of the duty and privilege of frequent public worship. In most of our Churches now we have frequent services, frequent opportunities of joining in the public worship of God. What is the view you take of these services? Do you yourselves value them? Would the Apostles and early Christians have valued them? And if so, why would they have done so? Let us now consider this question. Observe, it is not of *private* prayer that I am about to speak; but of prayer in the congregation, and in what our Lord calls "the House of Prayer."

It is certain that the Apostles and early Christians highly valued public and united prayers. Our Lord taught them so to do. For He said, as you remember, "*Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.*"* Why this "*gathering together?*" Would it not do as well to pray and meditate at home? No, our Lord does not say so. He distinctly attaches the blessing to the "gathering together."

Again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Christians are warned, "*Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.*" † In order to understand the full force of this command, you should know that at the time, and in the country in which it was given, it was very dangerous for men to obey it. The Hebrew Christians, to whom this Epistle was addressed, were at that time undergoing terrible persecutions. They were marked men; hated by their countrymen, because they were Christians. So that when they assembled themselves together, it was sometimes at imminent peril of their lives. Accordingly we are told that they used often to meet before the break of day, and in dens and caves of the

* Matt. xviii. 20. † Heb. x. 25.

earth, or in rooms, "*with doors shut for fear of the Jews.*"* Under these circumstances, how ready would men of our time have been to dispense with public assemblies altogether! They would have said, "What is the importance of our meeting together? Will it not do as well if we say our prayers in private? Why expose ourselves to danger, merely for the sake of public worship, when private prayers will answer every purpose?" So, perhaps, some might think. But against all such notions the Spirit of God warns them. "*Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhort one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.*"

"The day," here probably means that great day of trial, and of the coming of God to judgment upon the Jewish nation, which, as the whole Epistle shows, they were expecting daily. The greater your trial, says the inspired writer, the nearer any great day of trial, and of God's visitation, so much the more "assemble yourselves together." Nothing can more clearly show that the Spirit of God teaches that there is some special blessing promised to Christians meeting together for the worship of God. It is so clearly a great duty, that it must be practised, even at the risk of grave dangers; even in the face of terrible persecutions. And accordingly, we have set before us in the Word of God many great examples of regular and frequent attendance upon the public worship of God.

First, there is the example of our Lord Himself. Perhaps you might have expected that he would not have attended the services in the Temple, or in the Synagogue. Our Blessed Lord came, it is sometimes said, to preach a *spiritual* religion. He taught that as "*God is a Spirit, they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth*";† and that, under the Gospel, it was not to be at Jerusalem only, or on Mount Gerizim, but in every place that God was to be worshipped. One of the chief

* John xx. 19. † John iv. 24.

lessons He taught us was to seek to realize the blessed presence of our Heavenly Father in every place, and in all common life. But He did not therefore set us an example of neglecting Divine ordinances, or of thinking lightly of the House of God. On the contrary, in His whole life on earth, He was most attentive to all such ordinances. While He was living at Nazareth, "*it was His custom*," we are told, "*to go into the Synagogue on the Sabbath days*,"*—the only day when the Synagogues were open for any Divine service. Several times we read of his going up to Jerusalem on the great feast days, to keep the feasts there. Continually we read, not only on Sabbath days, but on common days, of His going up into "the Temple." Some might, perhaps, say, "We have no proof that it was on common days that our Lord went up into the Temple—perhaps it was only on the Sabbath days." But this would be a great mistake: for as there was the "daily sacrifice" in the Temple, so we are told distinctly that our Lord "*taught daily in the Temple*."† And that He did not intend this to be only a practice of His own, and not of the disciples afterwards, is certain; for we find that the Apostles and first Christians "*continued daily in the Temple*;"‡—or, as it is in my text, "*were continually in the Temple*,"—and evidently had the habit of going thither at "*hours of prayer*." §

Will any one of us say that he is wiser in the ways of godliness than inspired Apostles, and those first disciples of the Lord, who had learned the ways of God by inspiration from Himself? As I have before said, it is a peculiarly English prejudice, not existing to anything like the same extent in other countries, which leads any one to suppose that Christians ought to gather together for public worship only on Sundays. The doubt, to an attentive reader of the Bible, and particularly of the texts I have quoted, rather is, whether we are right in

* Luke iv. 16. † Luke xix. 47. ‡ Acts ii. 46.
§ Acts iii. 1.

not attending services on common days, if necessary business does not hinder it.

Now of course we cannot expect that ungodly persons, or those who are in the habit of judging for themselves as to what is right and good, merely by the light of their own reason, and what is called "common sense," or the ordinary judgment of the world, will attend much to any arguments drawn from the Word of God, so as to change their opinions or practice in such matters. There are, I fear, very many professing Christians who seldom come before God deliberately saying, "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*"* asking for guidance as to what is right. It is the few whose whole heart really wishes above all things to learn His will from His written Word, the laws of His Church, and the voice of an enlightened conscience, and then to live by it. And it will, I fear, always be the few in the world, not the many, who have any deep dissatisfaction with their present state,—any restless wish to become better, and to draw nearer to God, than now they are,—any real "hunger and thirst after" a higher righteousness than they have yet reached. They are the few, not the many, in the world, who sing from the very depths of their heart the beautiful words of the hymn:—

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!
E'en though it be a Cross
That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be—
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee."

The common run of mankind seem to think their souls near enough to God already. They think that in spiritual matters they are "*rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.*"† That real *love* of God that makes a soul delight itself in Him, to long for fellowship with Him more than for much treasure,—the real contri-

* Acts ix. 6 † Rev. iii. 17.

tion that makes a man "sigh from his heart because he is not more like to God's truest saints," * is a rare thing in the world. And, for that reason, many are very little struck with any arguments from the Word of God. If we tell them that the inspired Apostles and early Christians attended the public service of God continually, it will have little or no effect upon them; they do not alter their own habits in consequence. They think private prayer sufficient. I hope there will be an increasing number amongst us of a different mind; many, who, if they are once really convinced that the Bible commands, or promises a special blessing to the use of public worship, will at once determine that they will make a principle of attending it when they can. Look into Scripture, look at my text, look at the example of our Lord, and the precepts I have quoted, and judge for yourselves whether the mind of the Spirit is not clear, that there is a blessing upon frequent *public* service.

Of course, this, like all other ordinances, may easily become a mere form; men may make use of such things coldly, without heart or earnestness. But if you use it rightly, you have the very promise of God that it will bring your soul a blessing.

How the ancient saints of God used to delight in the service of the Temple! "*How amiable are Thy tabernacles, Thou Lord of Hosts! My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.*"† So the Israelites, returning to Jerusalem at the great feast-days, said,—"*I was glad when they said unto me, we will go into the house of the Lord; our feet shall stand in Thy gates, O Jerusalem.*"‡ Will any one say that a Christian ought to be less zealous for public worship than a Jew? that the fervour and zeal that burned in the soul of every true Israelite will not

* It was one of Luther's sayings, "It is a sign of true contrition, when thou seest a man that is better than thyself, and sighest from thy heart, because thou art not like him."

† Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2. ‡ Ps. cxxii. 1, 2.

also burn much more in the heart of every redeemed Christian? Must it not be coldness of heart towards God and His services, that limits men's attendance upon the great spiritual blessing of public worship to one day in the seven, and to one single service then?

Certainly the Apostles thought so, for they were "*daily in the Temple;*" and even amid the fires of terrible persecution, and in the face of danger of death itself, they yet would not "*forsake the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some was.*"

We must trust, then, that the Spirit of God will move many to feel the duty and the blessing of more frequent attendance upon the daily services of our Church. It may not be many who could or even who would find it profitable to them to attend always; but very many could, if they wished it, attend often. When there is any special reason that makes men wish to come to Church—as, for instance, a marriage to be witnessed, or some other unusual sight to be seen—we may sometimes see the Church overflowing, even on a week-day. The difficulties and excuses alleged at other times are overcome, because men are in earnest. In this, as in other matters, it holds good, that *those who are in earnest find means; those who are not so, find excuses.* If men really value Church services, they contrive to attend. And if they do so with all their heart, because they love God, and seek His blessing, they will find the blessing of it. God will draw nearer to them. And then the worship here will be the preparation for that worship which shall be when the great voice out of heaven shall cry, and the whole earth shall answer to it,—"*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.*'"*

* Rev. xxi. 3.

SERMON II.

ON THE JOY OF FREQUENT PUBLIC WORSHIP.

Ps. lxxxiv. 1-4—*O how amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts! My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house, and the swallow a nest, where she may lay her young: even thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be alway praising thee.*

DAVID—in his noble youth, at which time, more entirely we must fear than later in his life, he was "a man after God's own heart"—David, while he was wandering an outcast in the wilderness of the Holy Land, is thought to have written this beautiful Psalm, expressing his "*desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord.*"

Now why, you might ask, should David so wish for that?

Might he not, as I said last Sunday, have prayed and worshipped God in the mighty solitudes of Nature? Was not the earth and sky a nobler temple than any which the art of man could build? Is there not a "voice"

in all the glorious scenes of the natural world more striking, in some respects, than that of any human preacher? And did any one ever feel that more deeply than the "sweet Psalmist of Israel" who wrote the glorious 19th Psalm, which tells of how "*the Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handywork*," and how "*one day telleth another, and one night certifieth another*?"* Or had ever any one more of that devout spirit of contemplation which reads in all the common sights of Nature spiritual lessons—messages from the Father of man's spirit—parables of the kingdom of God—than David, who, while he kept those few sheep in the wilderness, wrote the 23rd Psalm? The care of the sheep led him to feel how, just as he cared for those helpless creatures, defended them against the wild beasts of the forest, the lions and the bears, the brute powers of nature about them, and by his royal power, as a child of the great Lord of all, discomfited and slew them, and just as he led the helpless sheep into green pastures, and away from the barren stones and wastes of the wilderness, so was there indeed One above, who equally cared for him. "The Lord," he says, "is *my* Shepherd:" *I* am as helpless against the spiritual enemies of my soul, as these sheep are against the lions and the bears; *I* am as blind to the way to those true pastures in which to feed my soul, as these dumb animals are to find their way about the lonely wilderness; but, notwithstanding this, I shall not starve, nor become the prey of evil spirits,—"*The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me.*"†

You see, then, my brethren, how spiritually-minded was this shepherd of the wilderness—how real and intense his faith in the Living God, present everywhere, in the loneliest wilderness as well as in the Temple. He

* Psalm xix. 1, 2. † Psalm xxiii. 1, 2, 4.

believed everywhere in the Presence of a Heavenly Father Whom his bodily eye could not see, nor his bodily ear hear, but Who, he knew, was always with him. But, my brethren, observe, it was this great lover of Nature—this man who could see in all common sights witnesses to the presence of God, who yet felt such a longing for the public services of the Temple.

Private prayer, however devout and fervent, was *not* enough for him. The great Temple of the Universe, full, to his noble soul, of witnesses for God, was yet no sufficient substitute to him for "*the courts of the Lord's House.*" "*One day in Thy courts,*" he says, "*is better than a thousand*" elsewhere; to be "*a doorkeeper*" there, was better than "*to dwell in the tents of ungodliness*:"* even the "swallow" and the "sparrow" that had found a nest in the altars of the Lord's House, were objects of envy to David.

Consider how this could be.

I spoke to you last Sunday morning of the evidence in Scripture, and in the history of the Church in the earliest ages, to the fact that the Apostles and first Christians valued and found pleasure in public worship; of how the inspired writers solemnly warned the Hebrew Christians against forsaking it, even when it was dangerous and could only be attended at the risk of their lives; and how evident it is that the Apostles and first disciples found peculiar and deep pleasure in attending the frequent services of the Temple; and how our Lord Himself seems to have taught them this by His own example, inasmuch as He attended daily in the Temple.

But men may not all see *why* good and holy men feel such pleasure in public worship, or find it even such a necessity for their souls. If they are men of reverent and teachable minds, willing to sit at the feet of the Apostles, they will allow at once that daily public worship must be good, since the Apostles practised it, and, above all, since our Lord Jesus Christ Himself did so; but they may

* Psalm lxxxiv. 10, 11.

think it difficult to feel the blessing of such frequent attendance at the "House of Prayer."

I shall endeavour, then, now to explain this.

Now of course no one can feel any wish for public services who has no *pleasure* in religion, or the life of faith, generally. There are men, we know, who are satisfied with this world, and its business and pleasures; and desire nothing more. Such persons may, it is true, attend public worship, and go through religious practices, but it is as a matter of principle, done by rule, because they think it is their duty; it is not in them the fruit of any inward longing after closer communion with God, or any pleasure or refreshment which they feel in the thought of a better and a holier world than this. All fervent expressions in the Psalms or elsewhere, such as those of the Psalm from which my text is taken, which speak of a real "hunger and thirst" after worship of any kind, must be strange to such persons. "What do they mean?" they might say,—"all this is mere enthusiasm. Acts of devotion are right for Sundays, or for some small part of Sundays, and it may be, and we believe is, our duty to say our prayers every day; but as for more than that, as for any delight in praying, or any deep and heartfelt pleasure in finding ourselves in the midst of a number of fellow-Christians, addressing their God and Saviour, or singing His praises, we do not know what it means." Religion, as I have said, is to such persons a matter altogether of principle, not of pleasure or impulse. Now, of course, to them, not only my text and the Psalm from which it is taken, but also all other warm expressions of piety, must seem utterly strange. It is not only *public* worship, but all worship, which is to such persons a weariness;—a duty to be got through, but not a well-spring of refreshment; not "*a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable.*"*

But to other men, public worship, and all worship, *is* a delight and a refreshment in the midst of the toils and the sorrows of this world. Yes, there are some

* Isaiah lviii. 13.

to whom this world, as it is, is a place of banishment from that which they love best. It is not that there are not many pleasures, in every way lawful, in it—much intercourse with friends, many occupations which furnish great and deep satisfaction—for such there are. But nevertheless they have a feeling that, with all this, this world is not the true or satisfying home of their spirits. They cannot here "*drink of God's pleasures as out of the river*,"* but only sip, as it were, drops of it. They cannot find here anything that altogether satisfies. Even the highest and best joys of earth have drawbacks. Even the sweetest cup of earthly joy has its bitter in it. Even the love of one another, the love of those who are really God's children, which is one of the very purest of all pleasures, yet always has in it the feeling that it may at any time be stopped by death, by the removal of the object of the affections to another and distant world, never to be seen again till they have passed the gateway of the grave. Even the noblest pursuits, the study of good books, the contemplation of God's mighty works of nature—all high and great things, yet are not free from the feeling of transitoriness. We know that they must all, at least in their present forms, pass away. So that sometimes, in the midst of them, we may be ready to say, "*As for our harps, we must hang them up upon the trees that are in this land of our captivity.*" † This earth is but as "a land of banishment" after all. We are not yet in our true home, where we can be safe. We are wanderers in a strange land. We do not yet "*see the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off.*"‡ Our dear Lord and Saviour is still hidden from our eyes; we cannot yet "*be ever with the Lord.*"§ We are separated also from loved earthly friends. Many whom we knew are gone; all must soon follow. We are, in very deed, as the saints said of old, *strangers and pilgrims on the earth*," || who "*have*

* Ps. xxxvi. 8. † Ps. cxxxvii. 2.
‡ Isa. xxxiii. 17. § 1 Thess iv. 17.
|| Heb. xi. 13.

here no continuing city."* And besides this, all around is sin and wickedness. We can see the meaning of the passionate words of ancient Saints speaking of the wickedness of the world; as, for instance, where one says, "*All the earth is full of darkness and cruel habitations.*"† We may often see wickedness rampant; violent men oppressing the righteous; the world, which God made beautiful, all overgrown with weeds; many sorrows on all sides of us; men, whom we once knew good and happy, fallen a prey to some of the manifold dangers and snares of the great enemy of souls; our own souls often beset with unruly passions, which we try to conquer, but cannot. All this is miserable. What, then, is the remedy? Why *this*—Look out from this world into Another. Look out with the steady, undoubting eye of faith in God, from the confusions of this world to the glorious eternal order of heaven. Look away from man who perishes, to God who perishes not, and unto Whom, and by Whom, all live. Sing songs that do not relate to this world, but to one greater, nobler, higher. Praise the bulwarks, not of any city or nation, or community, which is of merely human origin, but of that "*city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.*"‡ Look forth from all assemblies of earth to a greater assembly, gathered together for ever in heaven, even to the "*general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and God the Judge Himself, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus the Mediator of the new Covenant.*"§

All these things, it is true, you may think of in your private prayers; and I trust you do. And I will not ask now how many there are of those who do not come to public prayer often, who really make much use of private devotion. I believe, generally, the two go together. But what I say is, that all these great and blessed truths are represented most fully—are most brought home to our hearts and imaginations—in those assemblies of God's

* Heb. xiii. 14. † Ps. lxxiv. 21.
‡ Heb. xi. 10. § Heb. xii. 23, 24.

people gathered together for worship in God's House of Prayer, to which God's special blessing, Christ's special presence is promised. Here we look out from the disorder, and misery, and confusion of earth, and think of the order that never changes, in heaven; and see it pictured and imaged in the noble and steadfast order of our services. Here, amid all the many "changes and chances" of our own life—whether we are in sorrow or in joy, in happiness or misery—we still sing the same songs, chant the same glorious hymns. Here, in old age, we still sing, as we did years ago in our childhood,—"*To Thee Cherubin and Seraphin continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.*"

Does not your soul feel sometimes in this steadfastness of our ancient services—the same from generation to generation, whatever may be the changes of the world about us—an echo and representation of the great truth that "*The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient. He sitteth between the Cherubims, be the earth never so unquiet.*" "*The Lord sitteth above the waterflood; and the Lord remaineth a King for ever.*"* Oh, what a refreshment to the weary wanderers of earth, ever tossed in the tempests of time, to remember that! *This*, indeed, as we "*go through the vale of misery*," we may "*use for a well, and the pools are filled with water*;"† of which water, "*if a man drink, he shall never thirst.*" ‡ And the very order of our assemblies is a shadow of that of heaven: its music a faint earthly echo of the harps of God, and the songs of elect souls, safe for ever with God.

Now, my brethren, learn, I beseech you, to have something of this feeling in the services of the Church; and then I know you will not think them uninteresting, or unattractive. Learn some of that noble dissatisfaction with this world, because of its sin, and misery, and defilement, and with your own spiritual state, which makes a man long for a better and purer world. Learn

* Ps. xcix. 1, and xxix. 9. † Ps. lxxxiv. 6.
‡ John iv. 14.

the pleasure of worshipping God with His people, and then you will see how the very regularity and monotony, as some might think it, of Daily Service, has a blessed meaning. The bread of life is the same always. Every day we need confession and absolution ;—to tell out to our Father our sins, and listen to His promise of forgiveness. Every day of our pilgrimage it is a joy to think of our great home above, that changes not. And so we shall be able to understand David's enthusiastic song,—"*O, how amiable are Thy dwellings, Thou Lord of Hosts ! my soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord.*" For all these are shadows of the true joys of eternity, the actual presence of God, the satisfying of all desires, the joy of a victory won once for all.

All these thoughts show the pleasure of public worship ; not to all men, but to those who really believe in heaven, and rejoice in the thoughts and hopes of it, and do not only coldly acknowledge that there is such a state. Last Sunday I showed you the authority in Scripture for the practice of frequent or daily public worship ; to-day I have shown you, though very imperfectly, some of the pleasures of it. No one who considers these things can possibly deny that the Bible sanctions and encourages frequent public worship ; and that the Apostles and inspired men, and a Greater than Apostles, practised it. They may say that they cannot go with the Bible in this respect ; or that they do not mean to be guided by it ; but they cannot say that it does not teach these things.

What, then, is the practical conclusion ? I do not say that attendance at daily service is the positive duty of all men. Doubtless, there are very many who cannot possibly attend it. Their duties in life call them elsewhere ; or there are circumstances that make it difficult, or impossible for them to attend. And there are Christians, very devout, warm-hearted Christians, who do not find they can make it profitable to them ; their devotion is of another sort. But what I say is, that if they are dutiful

Christians, believing what the Bible says, acknowledging that inspired men knew what is good for the immortal souls of the children of God on earth, better than they do themselves, then they will acknowledge that daily public worship must be a privilege, at least to many; that if they cannot attend it they have a loss; that if they could attend it—not as a mere form, or because they must, but willingly and gladly, because it is a pleasure and refreshment to their souls—it would be better for them; they would be in a higher state than they are. And certainly this I say, that there are many women, many servants, many persons of various kinds, who, if they had more faith in God's Word—more of that love of God which makes a man delight in all that helps him to hold communion with God and with His people, living and departed—(for surely, as God is true, we have fellowship with Saints in Paradise, in the public assemblies of His Church Militant)—I say there are many persons, who, if they had more of living faith and love, would attend church frequently on week-days; who yet, as it is, are seldom seen within its doors from one Sunday to another, and only once then. And if they did attend, and were asked why they did so, I think they might answer simply,—"Because I believe the Apostles knew better than I do what brings the soul near to God; and I find that they and God's saints, in all times, have delighted in frequent—yes, even in daily—public worship. That is enough for me; I had rather live on earth by their judgment, than by my own. And besides, when I have the habit of it, and do it heartily, because I love God, then I do learn to understand the pleasure that David and the Psalmists felt in their ancient services in the Temple. I do learn to see why these services were such a pleasure to them, and how they could say while wandering in the wilderness, "*How amiable are Thy dwellings, Thou Lord of Hosts! my soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord;*" and "*I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the*

house of the Lord; our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem."

I will conclude with the words of a great Christian writer, speaking of this subject, and of those who are seldom seen in God's house on week-days:—"Very likely," he says, "you may be right in not coming; you have duties connected with your temporal calling, which have a claim upon you; you must serve like Martha, you have not the leisure of Mary. Well, be it so; still you have a loss as Martha had, while Mary was at Jesus' feet. You have a loss. I do not say that God cannot make it up to you; doubtless, He will bless every one who continues in the path of duty. He blessed Peter in prison, and Paul on the sea, as well as the mother of Mark, and the daughters of Philip. Doubtless, even in your usual employments you can be glorifying your Saviour: you can be thinking of Him; you can be thinking of those who are met together in worship; you can be following in your heart, as far as may be, the prayers they offer. Doubtless; only try to realise to yourself that continual prayer and praise, of which the Bible speaks, is a privilege; only feel, in good earnest, what somehow the mass of Christians, after all, do not receive; that '*It is good for us to be here;*'* feel as those early Christians felt, when persecution prevented them from meeting; or, as holy David in his youth, when he cried out, '*My soul is athirst for God; yea, even for the living God; when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?*'† Feel this, and we need not be anxious about your coming: you will come if you can;"—because it is a pleasure, a delight and refreshment to your soul, during all your pilgrimage here below.

* Matt. xvii. 4. † Ps. xlii. 2.

APPENDIX.

I am glad to reprint here some excellent remarks, contributed by a friend * to the Hagley Parish Magazine, referring to the daily prayers of the Church, under the title of

"ONLY THE PRAYERS."

"One too often hears this expression used, as a reason against going to church, even by persons who are in many ways good and religious. And as it seems to me to contain in itself a very grievous though a very common error on a most important subject, I have wished to take this opportunity of saying a few words about it.

"Now, I have two objections to make to this form of words; (1), that it is in the main untrue; and (2), that, in so far as it is true, it is very unchristian and irreligious. I use strong language; but if you will read to the end, I think you will agree, not *too* strong.

"I. 'Only the Prayers' is untrue, when it is said of the short Services so admirably appointed for our use, the use of rich and poor, in the Church of England. For the Morning and Evening Prayers in the Prayer-book contain, besides many beautiful prayers, a number of the sweet songs of David, called the Psalms, one or two Canticles taken either from the Bible or from the

* Mr. J. G. Talbot, M.P., Member for the University of Oxford.

pure scriptural writings of the early Christians, and also one chapter from the old Testament and one from the New. And this rich collection of religious treasures is what many Christians call 'only the Prayers.'

"But, 2 (and this is the most important), these words are unchristian. Why do we object to go to Church when there is a plain service, 'only the Prayers?' Because we want to hear a sermon from a man, a divinely-commissioned man indeed, but still a man; or because we like to hear beautiful music. Now these things are very good and proper accompaniments of our Service, but not the chief purpose for which we ought to go to church.

"What does our Saviour call the Temple (and we may take His words to apply to Christian churches), but 'The House of Prayer?' What were the Apostles doing when they 'were continually in the Temple' after His ascension, praising and blessing God? And why is it that Jesus Christ our Lord advises us to meet together in His name? Is it not because He has promised to hear the prayers of two or three who so meet together? Prayer, united, common prayer, has ever been the favourite occupation of God's saints: '*I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord.*'* And united prayer and praise we must conceive to be chief amongst the blessed occupations of the resting, waiting souls in Paradise, as it will be for ever one principal part of the perfect joy, the devout delight, of the redeemed in heaven. And so I think it follows that those who despise what our Blessed Lord and His Apostles teach us is the chief part of God's service, do really (though ignorantly) speak in an unchristian manner.

"Whenever, therefore, we are inclined to excuse

ourselves from going to Church, when we have opportunity, because there is no sermon, or no music, let us remember that the Common Prayers of the Church—by which we join with all holy persons throughout the world, and feel the fulness of the communion of saints—that these prayers are the noblest part of our life, and that the moments we so spend, if we really pray, are the moments in which we are taken furthest from the mists, and clouds, and darkness of earth, and drawn most near to the glories of heaven, where God's special Presence dwells.

"I ought perhaps to add, that the reason why it is not enough to 'say our prayers at home,' when we can say them at church, is simply this: that our blessed Lord went himself to the Temple, and taught us to pray with our brethren; and that His holy Apostles and the early Christians taught and did the same. Good, humble Christians will need no more arguments than these."

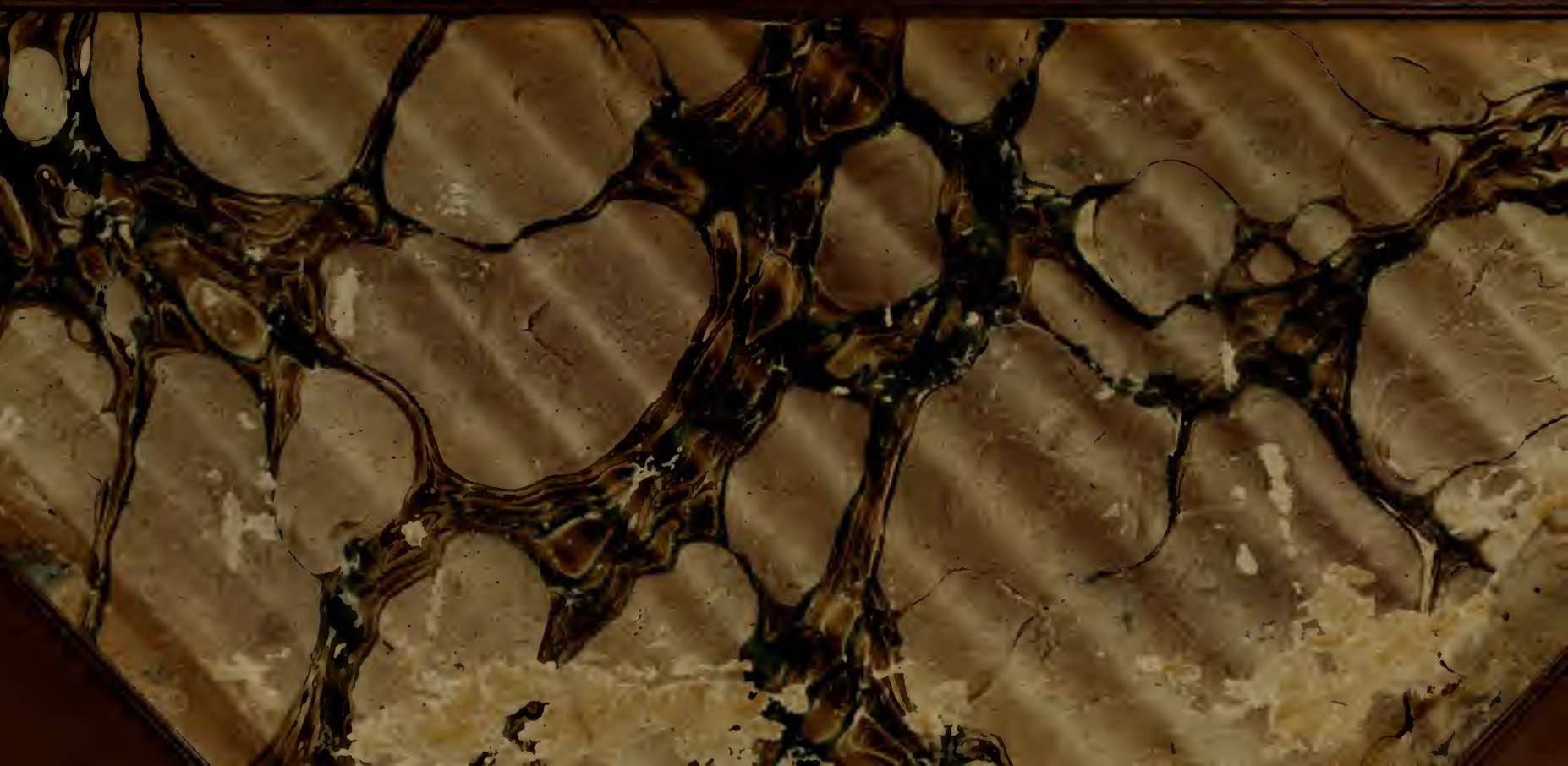
J. G. T.

It appears from a comparison of the *Guide to the Churches where Daily Prayers are said in Great Britain and Ireland* (Masters), (so far, that is, as they are known to the compiler), and from the *Guide to the Church Services in London and its Suburbs* (J. H. Parker), with the *Clergy List*, that in 1862 the whole number of churches in which there was Daily Service, including London, was 764.* Of these, 335 were in parishes of which the population was under 2,000. What the numbers are now, in 1879, it is difficult to ascertain.

* Ps. cxxii. 1.

x 243 in London alone (1878)

Probably it is because the custom has so largely spread, and is so general now, that such statistics as the above are no longer published. The practice belongs now to no one section in the Church, but has taken its place once more among the practices, and universal customs, of ordinary Christian devotion. It is satisfactory to know that we join with so large a number of our fellow-Churchmen in daily worship.

" There are in this loud, stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of th' everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat."

Christian Year.